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The Intelligence War

BILLY CARTER'S LIBYAN LINK

By ROBERT MOSS

WITH his popularity slumping in the run-up to the Democratic convention, "Billygate" may prove as fatal for President Carter as Watergate was for President Nixon.

Mr Carter can no longer hope to escape being tarnished by the Press revelations of his brother Billy's role as a paid agent of Libya's erratic dictator, Col Gaddafi. It has been publicly admitted that the White House actually sought to use Billy as a "back channel" in its dealings with Tripoli.

One of the more serious charges that the specially appointed Senate investigating committee will explore is that the White House improperly alerted Billy to Justice Department moves to indict him for failing to register as a foreign agent—after he had already received \$220,000 (£95,000) in cash from the Libyans.

Scandal breaks

The full enormity of the scandal is only beginning to dawn on the American public. Billy Carter chose to enter the service of a state that is one of the foremost backers on international terrorism. He allowed the Libyans to use him as an agent of influence in Washington.

Some of the Libyans with whom he was involved are closely associated with Gaddafi's intelligence service, or Mukhabarat, which in turn is subject to influence from KGB and, in particular, East German liaison officers stationed in Tripoli.

The key Libyan involved was Ahmed al-Shabati, the head of Gaddafi's "foreign liaison office," who was introduced to some of the leading citi-

zens of Atlanta by Billy in January last year.

According to intelligence sources in Washington, Shabati works in close collusion with Gaddafi's secret service and the East Germans.

Significantly, the first contacts between the Libyans and Billy Carter were reportedly arranged via Libyan operatives stationed in Italy; Gaddafi's ambassador, Gibrill Shalouf, made two trips to Georgia to persuade the American President's brother to make his first visit to Tripoli.

According to Italian security officials, the Libyans have made a big investment in covert action and support for extremist groups in Italy. In the course of their investigation of the kidnapping and assassination of the Christian Democrat leader, Aldo Moro, in 1978, the Italian police found maps of Lebanon showing the location of terrorist training camps.

On the back was the name and private telephone number of a director of the Libyan National Bank who is known to have been a conduit for funds to Palestinian and West European revolutionary groups, making frequent visits to Cyprus in order to arrange the transfers.

In 1978 alone (again, according to Italian security officials) Gaddafi provided \$2,000,000 (£840,000) for Sardinian separatists. In the course of the Moro investigation, Italian police received a tip that the politician was being held in the basement at the Libyan Embassy. Short of invading the Embassy, they were unable to check whether or not this was a false trail.

The murder in London of two of Gaddafi's exiled opponents

last April by a Libyan hit-team was further evidence of the direct involvement of Billy Carter's friends in world-wide terrorism.

In fairness, it must be said that the Libyan regime makes little secret of its activities. Gaddafi's Information Minister, Muhammad al-Zuwayy, has publicly announced that "we assert to the whole world that we provide material, moral and political support to every liberation revolution in the world."

Beneficiaries range from the IRA, the Italian Red Brigades and the Basque guerrilla group ETA to the radical Palestinian organisations, Moslem secessionists in the Philippines, and Latin American terrorists, including those who are currently seeking to overthrow non-Communist Governments throughout Central America.

The Libyans have trained PLO recruits as pilots, supplied Joshua Nkomo's Zapu movement with the heat-seeking Sam-7 missiles that were used to bring down two civilian planes in Rhodesia, and awarded the notorious Venezuelan terrorist chief "Carlos" \$2,000,000 for his much-publicised abduction of Opec oil ministers in Vienna in 1975.

Gaddafi has also used his country's oil riches in a massive programme of covert action, seeking to influence the media and political circles in many Western and Third World countries.

Pro-Libyan propaganda publications like GREEN DAWN in London (to which a leading British supporter of the CIA defector, Philip Agee is a contributor) are one element in this campaign. Under the counter bribes to influence

business or political decision-making are more effective and are being widely disseminated.

Though the mercurial Gaddafi is an unreliable puppet for Moscow, it would be myopic to ignore the extent to which Libyan covert action programmes provide a useful vehicle for his Soviet allies.

Libya is dependent on Russia for massive arms deliveries (under a huge deal, valued by some experts at no less than \$12 billion (£5 billion), that was concluded in 1976) and for military guarantees against an attack by Egypt—which Gaddafi has provoked by financing repeated attempts to assassinate the Egyptian President.

Soviet interests

By playing a vanguard role in the bid to sabotage President Carter's Middle East peace strategy, Libya has served Soviet interests well. Libya may also provide Russia with a convenient intermediary, or "cut-out," in channelling support to terrorists around the world with whom the Soviet leadership would not wish to be publicly identified.

It is ironic that the East German Ministry of State Security (MfS) should have been delegated by the KGB—according to West European intelligence sources—to take primary responsibility for liaison with the Libyan secret service and its "special action" squads, which carry out assassinations.

The East German spy Chief, Markus (or "Misha") Wolf, who holds Soviet as well as East German citizenship, happens to be the only Jewish intelligence director in the Soviet Bloc.